

ICH NGO Forum STATEMENT 7.GA- Paris

UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural heritage

1. This is 2018 – a year when the **UNESCO 2003 Convention** will celebrate 15 years of international cooperation for the **safeguarding of living heritage** practices throughout the globe: a living heritage in all its rich and fascinating diversity. Living in vastly changing times, moving through globalisation, migration movements, digitisation, the economic crisis, climate change; and given the fragility of numerous ICH practices facing enormous challenges, we have come forward to collaborate keeping in mind the value of ICH as a source of cultural diversity and a vector of sustainable development.

2. The commitment for **participatory safeguarding** is core to the mission of the 2003 Convention. Participation of ICH Communities, groups and individuals involved is key in the implementation of safeguarding initiatives. In the same spirit the Convention has been one of the pioneers in the UN to explore participation of civil society in heritage governance, and it has been inviting NGOs from all the regions of the world to relate to the work of the Convention and to offer advisory services.

3. The ICH NGO Forum is enchanted by the **deliberate sustained effort towards achieving the goals of the Convention** and so **evaluating and monitoring the course** of the Convention in its implementation; as being reflected in the Committee's debates, in the huge work delivered for the Global Capacity Building Programme, and for the setting up of the Overall Results Framework, and in initiatives such as the #livingheritage or the Safeguarding Survey just launched.

The ICH NGO Forum is **delighted by the adoption** of the **Overall Results framework** for the 2003 UNESCO Convention at 7.GA. It will be guiding all of our efforts lying ahead, and hence means a major development for monitoring the work of the Convention both at global and country level. Accredited NGOs are fully committed to participate in all dimensions of the Framework where NGOs are in capacity to contribute.

4. With a growing acquaintance of the Convention worldwide, **concrete activities of NGOs** are contributing for the **outreach and civil society involvement in the life of the Convention**. See for example the recent Report on the Contribution of ICH to Sustainable Development in South Asia, or the transnational cooperation project on ICH and Museums in European context. The NGO Forum's online journal for exchange of experiences from the field, **#HeritageAlive**, reached a new milestone with the publication of a book on traditional knowledge of medicine in 2017 with support of ICHCAP (Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region).

5. We would like to thank UNESCO for having encouraged and given the opportunity to NGOs to share some of their safeguarding actions during the 7th General Assembly. The **exhibition and performances** were hosted by a vast cooperation of accredited NGOs from Asia, Europe, South America and Africa and Arab Region.

6. As you all may be aware, **collaboration and collective efforts** by the accredited NGOs have gathered momentum through the establishment of the **ICH NGO Forum** since 2009. Developing a platform for communication and coordination with accredited NGOs ever since, the Forum has delivered numerous outcomes already and is dedicating growing efforts for the outreach and civil society involvement in the life of the Convention.

The State Parties have consistently welcomed the endeavours of the Forum.

These include:

- **Capacity-building for NGOs**, aligned with the Global Capacity Programme of the Convention
- **Working Groups** addressing actual challenges faced in the safeguarding work.
- **Regional networks** to develop network cooperation, relationships and capacities in the regions.
- Beyond all this, the ICH NGO Forum is continuously working towards a **transparent and sustainable format of governance**. Since the GA 2 years ago, it has set up an association and a bank account for transparent management and to enhance productive cooperation and support possibilities with states parties and other partners in the Convention. The Forum held first elections of its Steering Committee during the 12.COM meetings in Korea.

All achievements in the Forum are depending solely on **voluntary efforts** currently. Strengthening the capacity of the Forum through financial and human resources is without hesitation the next step to be taken with view to an increasingly effective organization and activating the potential contribution of NGOs to their full potential for the Convention.

7. A **new possibility** is upcoming: the IGC at 12.COM invited 'the Secretariat and the informal ad hoc working group to reflect, in consultation with the accredited NGOs, on the **possible ways in which the participation of NGOs under the 2003 Convention could be further enhanced and how this would be reflected in the accreditation and renewal mechanisms of NGOs**. The Forum absolutely stresses the importance of these discussions to activate and reach results, in order to safeguard ICH more effectively and reflect the spirit of the Convention more truly. We look forward to the process and will continue to work constructively towards the aims of the Convention and safeguarding of ICH across the world. The proximity of NGOs to the field, working directly with the communities who carry this heritage, in addition to the before mentioned achievements, are an asset that can tremendously serve the 2003 Convention.

8. The ICH NGO Forum **welcomes newly accredited NGOs** at the 7th General Assembly and is happy to invite new colleagues to take part in the activities and collaboration platform via the Forum.

9. The ICH NGO Forum **thanks the Secretariat** for its support and counsel on the participation of the NGOs.

10. The journey and this waypoint at the 7th GA are **promising for the future we want**. The agenda of this 7th GA is timely and strongly in line with our expectations. The ICH NGO Forum wishes all parties involved continuous fruitful voyage, outlining the Overall Results Framework to guide the Convention, fine tuning the Operational Directives in line with the evolutions, and taking care of the Governance, Procedures and Working Methods of the 2003 Convention.

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